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The Peace Corps' Odyssey

Still Starry-Eyed in the Yuppie Years

By Michael Kernan
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Peace Corps is 24 years old now, and the bureaucrats have been gnawing at it, and we are five presidents down the road from John F. Kennedy, whose idea it was, but it still may be the only government agency that sings of the people we Americans would like to think we are: boundlessly energetic, alight for new horizons, eager to change the world for the good.

The world has indeed changed in 24 years. So has the Corps.

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Claims were made that the Corps was being used as a cover for the CIA, though they were never proved. (Even so, when Ruppe arrived on the scene she criticized Reagan's choice of Thomas Pauken, a former intelligence officer, to head ACTION. Both her nomination and Pauken's were delayed by the ensuing debate on the Hill. Ruppe's driving concern for the Peace Corps' image not only led her, a Michigan codirector for Reagan's 1980 campaign, to challenge the president on this issue, but also to open the Corps' first public relations department.)

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